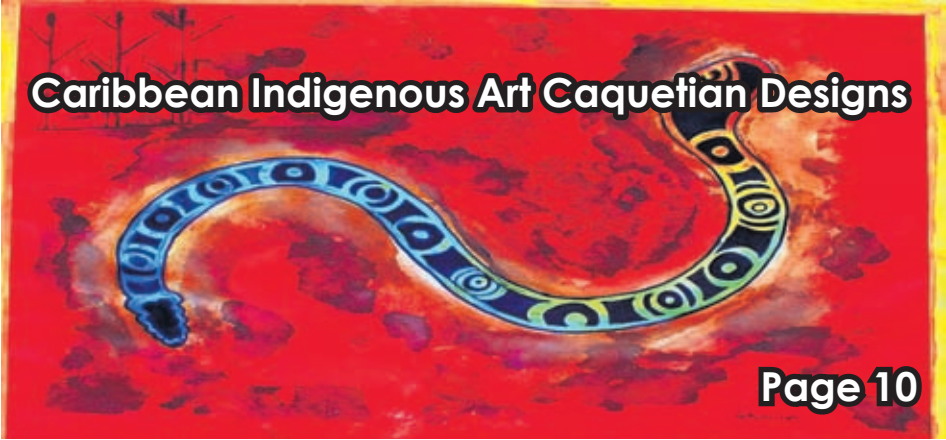




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Page 8

High gas prices push up inflation, but prices overall are slowly moving in the right direction

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
AP Economics Writer
WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation jumped last month largely because of a spike in gas prices but other costs rose more slowly, suggesting price pressures are easing at a gradual pace. In a set of conflicting data released Wednesday, the Labor Department said the consumer price index rose 3.7% in August from a year ago, up from a 3.2% annual pace in July. Yet excluding the volatile food and energy categories, so-called core prices rose 4.3%, a step back from 4.7% in July and the smallest increase in nearly two years. That is still far from the Federal Reserve's 2% target. The big rise in gas prices accounted for more than half of the monthly inflation increase, the government said.



Continued on Page 3 Shoppers look at blankets on sale in a Costco warehouse Thursday, Aug. 24, 2023, in Sheridan, Colo.

Associated Press

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Utah GOP Sen. Mitt Romney, former presidential candidate and governor, won't seek reelection in 2024

By **MICHELLE L. PRICE**

Associated Press

Utah Republican Sen. Mitt Romney said Wednesday that he will not run for reelection in 2024, creating a wide-open contest in a state that heavily favors Republicans and is expected to attract a crowded field. Romney, a former presidential candidate and governor of Massachusetts, made the announcement in a video statement. The 76-year-old said the country is ready for new leadership. "Frankly, it's time for a new generation of leaders," he said. "They're the ones that need to make the decisions that will shape the world they will be living in."

Romney noted that he would be in his mid-80s at the end of another six-year Senate term. While he didn't directly reference the ages of President Joe Biden, 80, or former President Donald Trump, 77, who are the leaders for their parties' 2024 presidential nominations, he



Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, and other senators arrive at the chamber for votes, at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2023.

accused both men of not responding enough to the growing national debt, climate change and other long-term issues.

He is the sixth incumbent senator to announce plans to retire after the end of the term in 2025, joining Repub-

lican Mike Braun of Indiana and Democrats Tom Carper of Delaware, Ben Cardin of Maryland, Dianne Feinstein of California and Debbie Stabenow of Michigan. Romney easily won election in reliably GOP Utah in 2018 but was expected

to face more resistance from his own party after he emerged as one of the most visible members to break with Trump, who is still the party's de-facto leader. Romney in 2020 became the first senator in U.S. history to vote to convict a president from their own party in an impeachment trial. Romney was the only Republican to vote against Trump in his first impeachment and one of seven to vote to convict him in the second.

Trump was acquitted by the Senate both times. Romney was booed by a gathering of the Utah Republican Party's most active members months after his vote at the second impeachment trial, and a measure to censure him narrowly failed. Members of the party even flung the term "Mitt Romney Republican" at their opponents on the campaign trail in 2022's midterm elections.

Still, Romney has been seen as broadly popular in Utah, which has long harbored a band of the party that's favored civil conservatism and resisted Trump's brash and norm-busting style of politics.

The state is home to the anti-Trump Lincoln Project; the anti-Trump Republican Evan McMullin, who

launched a longshot 2016 presidential campaign; and GOP Gov. Spencer Cox, who has been critical of Trump and is also up for reelection in 2024.

More than a majority of the state's population are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The faith arrived in the western state with pioneers fleeing religious persecution and spread globally with the religion's missionaries, a legacy that's left the church's conservative members embracing immigrants and refugees.

Romney, a Brigham Young University graduate and one of the faith's most visible members after his 2012 presidential campaign, had been a popular figure in the state for two decades. He burnished his reputation there by turning around the bribery scandal-plagued 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah, making it a global showcase for Salt Lake City. The wealthy former private equity executive served as governor of Massachusetts from 2003 to 2007. In 2006, Romney signed a health care law in Massachusetts that had some of the same core features as the 2010 federal health care law signed by President Barack Obama, who would go on to defeat Romney in the 2012 White House election.

During his presidential campaign, Romney struggled to shake the perception that he was out of touch with regular Americans. The image crystallized with his comment, secretly recorded at a fundraiser, that he didn't worry about winning the votes of "47% of Americans" who "believe they are victims" and "pay no income tax."

He moved to Utah after his defeat for the presidency. In 2016, he made his first extraordinary break with Trump, delivering a scathing speech in Utah denouncing Trump, then a presidential candidate, as "a phony, a fraud" and who was unfit to be president. □



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High gas prices push up inflation, but prices overall are slowly moving in the right direction

Continued from Front

Despite the seemingly divergent figures, the decline in the core measure points to inflation coming under control, but at a much more gradual pace than earlier this year. The Federal Reserve closely tracks core prices because they are seen as a better indicator of future inflation trends.

The Fed is widely expected to skip an interest rate hike at its meeting next week. Wednesday's figures keep the prospect of another rate increase later this year on the table, however, perhaps at its November or December meetings, economists said, because core prices ticked up a bit faster in August than in July. Wednesday's report suggested that after inflation faded quickly over the spring and the summer, future declines will be much more gradual. Inflation dropped to 3% in June, down from a 9.1% peak in June 2022. Some of the forces that pulled down prices earlier this year — such as lower gas prices and improving supply chains, which reduced the cost of goods like furniture — have largely played out, economists say.

"We're getting to the stage where we've basically had all the low hanging fruit in terms of disinflation," said Blerina Uruci, an economist at T. Rowe Price. "The progress on core inflation over the coming months is going to be slow and it's going to be uneven."

On a monthly basis, consumer prices jumped 0.6% in August, the biggest increase in more than a year. Gas prices spiked nearly 11%, though they have since leveled off: According to AAA, the average nationwide price at the pump was \$3.85 on Wednesday, unchanged from a month ago.

Excluding food and energy, core prices increased just 0.3% in August from July, though that is up from 0.2% in the two previous months. Energy costs rose 5.6%



A motorist fills up the tank of a vehicle at a Shell station Wednesday, July 5, 2023, in Englewood, Colo.

Associated Press

just in August, the biggest monthly increase since June 2022. Auto insurance prices also soared, rising 2.4% last month and 19.1% compared with a year ago. The sharp increase in new car prices in the past two years has also made them more expensive to insure and repair.

Airfares soared 4.9% in August from July, though after two months of sharp declines. At the same time, used car costs dropped 1.2%, the third straight decrease, while hotel prices fell 3%, also the third consecutive fall.

Grocery prices moved up 0.2%, a trend that has strained many household's finances. But food cost increases are cooling: They rose 3% compared with a year ago, down from double-digit increases last year. Prices increase are slowing yet, as any American can attest, food, rent, automobiles, appliances, all cost considerably more than

they did two years ago.

While filling up her car with gas Tuesday night in Falls Church, Virginia, Francesca, who declined to give her last name, said she still notices how much higher her grocery bill has gotten. "We're not buying crazy things, like caviar, just the basics," she said, referring to her weekly food shopping. "And it's like \$150," compared to a tab of closer to \$100 before the pandemic.

Still, Federal Reserve officials are becoming more open to the idea that inflation is coming under control, though chair Jerome Powell warned last month it was still "too high."

In his high-profile speech at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Powell said the Fed would proceed "carefully" with any further rate hikes, which many economists saw as an opening for the Fed to skip a rate increase at its September 19-20 meeting. When the Fed increases its

key rate, it typically raises the cost of mortgages, auto loans, and business borrowing.

The Fed has lifted its benchmark interest rate 11 times in the past 12 meetings to about 5.4%, the highest level in 22 years. It increased the rate a quarter-point in July after leaving it unchanged in June.

Lorie Logan, president of the Federal Reserve's Dallas branch, said last week that "another skip could be appropriate" at its next meeting September 19-20, "but skipping does not imply stopping."

Wall Street traders see only a 3% chance of a rate hike next week, according to CME's FedWatch. But they have priced in a 40% chance for an increase at the Fed's subsequent meeting in November.

Wednesday's report shows prices are sticky enough "to have another rate hike this year," said Tim Duy, chief U.S. economist at SGH

Macro. Duy said that the economy is expanding at a healthy pace, confounding long-standing fears that a recession is imminent. Americans boosted their spending at restaurants and retailers in July, and hiring has remained solid. Yet Duy added that one risk posed by the steady growth is that it could keep inflation pressures high. Companies are boosting pay to find and keep employees, which is great for workers, but can lead businesses to raise prices to offset the higher labor costs. Strikes and labor disputes this year could lead to more healthy pay gains. The Teamsters won robust wage increases in recent negotiations with UPS, while American Airline pilots also secured higher pay in a new contract. The United Auto Workers is also seeking higher pay from the three major U.S. automakers.

The push for higher pay, however, comes after incomes for most Americans trailed inflation for much of the past two years. A report from the Census Bureau Tuesday showed that the inflation-adjusted income for a typical household dropped 2.3% last year. Economists expect workers to keep pushing to make up for lost ground.

The European Central Bank is also contemplating lifting its key interest rate at its next meeting Thursday, though officials could choose to also skip an increase. The European economy is nearing recession as it struggles with high inflation and rising borrowing costs.

The 20 countries that use the euro currency are expected to grow just 0.8% this year, according to a gloomy forecast issued Monday by the European Commission, the European Union's executive arm. Germany's economy, the EU's largest, is projected to shrink 0.4%. Inflation in the EU is higher than in the U.S. — it was 5.3% in July — though that is half of the 10.6% peak reached in October. □

New England getting more rain, watching Hurricane Lee's path after flooding, sinkholes

By **MICHAEL CASEY** and **KATHY McCORMACK**
Associated Press

LEOMINSTER, Mass. (AP)

— Parts of New England already soaked with rain were expecting more precipitation on Wednesday, as residents in Massachusetts and Rhode Island spent the day cleaning up the flood damage while bracing for Hurricane Lee as it barreled north toward the region.

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey issued a state of emergency Tuesday night following the "catastrophic flash flooding and property damage" in two counties and other communities. The 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain over six hours earlier in the week was a "200-year event," said Matthew Belk, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Boston.

Healey said Wednesday that while there aren't plans to call up the National Guard, the state's emergency management agency is keeping a close eye on the weather and is prepared to offer assistance.

She said the state is monitoring the conditions of dams in many communities and urged residents to



Businesses on County Street in Attleboro, Mass. remain closed due to flooding from heavy rain Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023.

Associated Press

take seriously any warnings of potential flooding and to stay off the roads when ordered.

"Something that looks pretty minor can, just within a couple of hours, turn into something very serious, potentially deadly and very, very destructive," Healey said.

The rain created several sinkholes in Leominster, Massachusetts, including one at a dealership where

several cars were swallowed up. In Providence, Rhode Island, downpours flooded a parking lot and parts of a shopping mall. Firefighters used inflatable boats to rescue more than two dozen people stranded in cars.

Parking lots at several businesses briefly became lakes in Leominster and North Attleborough and many front yards were still partially covered in water.

For a second day, families were busy assessing the damage and removing flood-damaged debris. The sounds of generators filled the air in many neighborhoods, as residents worked to remove water from their basements.

Dawn Packer, who runs a North Attleborough home preschool, looked across the street Monday evening to see a UPS truck floating in several feet of water.

Soon her yard was flooding. "We ran downstairs. It was dry. We were happy about that. I started putting all my child care center stuff up high. All of sudden, the door smashed open. The water was so forceful. It just smashed the door open and poured in, 4 feet," she said. "The refrigerator just shot up into the air and fell down on its side. It was horrific."

After a dry day, it started raining in Leominster again on Wednesday afternoon. Parts of Massachusetts and Rhode Island were under a flash flood warning. Earlier in the day, there were heavy downpours in Danbury, Connecticut, where officials said they had to rescue several people from vehicles stuck in floodwaters.

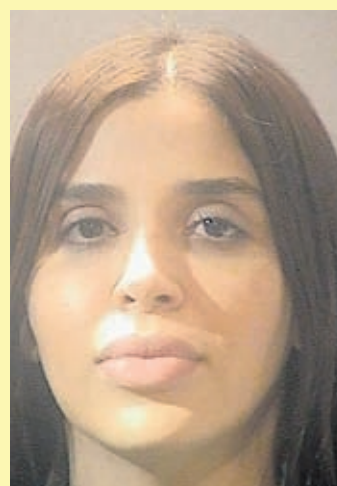
Rain from Hurricane Lee didn't contribute to the flooding earlier this week. But it could inundate parts of the coastal Northeast during the weekend, forecasters said. Lee is traveling north and could make landfall in Nova Scotia, Canada, possibly as a tropical storm, forecasters said. "The ground is saturated. It can't take in anymore," Dean Mazzarella, mayor in Leominster, said at a news

conference Wednesday in the city about 40 miles (65 kilometers) northwest of Boston. But he said the city had emergency resources at the ready "for whatever the weather brings."

Mazarella said up to 300 people were evacuated by Tuesday morning in the city, which has not seen such widespread damage since a 1936 hurricane. Most buildings downtown flooded and some collapsed. Rail service also was disrupted.

Mazzarella said the city was trying to help get assistance to homeowners and businesses that suffered damage. He said early estimates on city infrastructure restoration projects could be anywhere from \$25 million to \$40 million. □

El Chapo's wife released from U.S. custody after completing 3-year prison sentence



This photo provided by the Alexandria Adult Detention Center shows Emma Coronel Aispuro.

Associated Press

The wife of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán was released from federal custody on Wednesday after completing a three-year sentence for helping him run his multibillion-dollar criminal empire, the federal Bureau of Prisons said.

Emma Coronel Aispuro, who pleaded guilty in 2021 to three federal offenses as part of a plea deal with federal prosecutors, had been moved from a Texas prison to a California halfway house prior to her re-

lease. She will now serve four years of supervised release.

Colonel Aispuro expressed "true regret for any and all harm" when she was sentenced after pleading guilty to charges including money laundering conspiracy and engaging in transactions with a foreign narcotics trafficker.

She also helped her husband plan a dramatic escape through a tunnel dug underneath a prison in Mexico in 2015 by smuggling to him a GPS watch

disguised as a food item, prosecutors have said. That helped those digging the tunnel pinpoint his location and reach him.

El Chapo, the leader of the Sinaloa cartel, was recaptured the following year. He was sentenced to life behind bars in a U.S. prison in 2019 for a massive drug conspiracy that spread murder and mayhem for more than two decades. He insisted his trial in New York wasn't fair and told the judge his case "was stained." □

Despite opposition, Britain passes law to curb prosecutions for Northern Ireland 'Troubles' violence

By JILL LAWLESS

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Not a lot unites Northern Ireland's fractious political and religious groups. The British government has managed it with a law that sets out to lay the ghosts of decades of violence to rest.

All of Northern Ireland's major political parties, Catholic and Protestant churches, human rights organizations and the United Nations opposed the Legacy and Reconciliation Bill, which passed its final hurdle in Parliament late Tuesday. The legislation will stop most prosecutions for killings by militant groups and British soldiers during "the Troubles," three decades of violence in which more than 3,500 people died.

The 1998 Good Friday peace accord largely ended the killings. But a quarter century on, the wounds are still raw for those who lost loved ones at the hands of Irish republican and British loyalist militias and U.K. troops. Many say the new law will allow killers to get away with murder.

Kenny Donaldson, director of services at the South East Fermanagh Foundation, a victims' group, said Troubles survivors "feel deeply



Masked youths throw petrol bombs at a police Land Rover as Republican protesters opposed to the Good Friday Agreement hold a parade in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, Monday, April 10, 2023.

Associated Press

offended" by the bill's use of the words legacy and reconciliation. "The very language legacy, in the past that's society's language. That's not what it is for victims and survivors, because it's their present," Donaldson said.

"Reconciliation, real reconciliation cannot happen in this place unless we have a clear of the decks. And that requires people from right across the board to own the things that they

did," he said. Under the terms of the 1998 peace agreement, many militants were released from prison or were not prosecuted for actions during the Troubles, a decision that long rankled people affected by the violence. Britain's Conservative government says the law reflects the increasingly small likelihood of convicting defendants of decades-old crimes. Instead of the courts, a new Independent Commission

for Information Recovery and Reconciliation loosely modeled on South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission will investigate alleged crimes. Former militants and soldiers who cooperate with the commission and reveal what they know about past crimes will be granted immunity from prosecution, and new civil claims and inquests over the Troubles will be banned. People who refuse to "engage mean-

ingfully" with the commission could still be charged. Almost no one in Northern Ireland wants to return to violence, but it remains a divided place, a part of the United Kingdom where some identify as British and some as Irish.

The U.K.'s exit from the European Union in 2020 sparked a political crisis that collapsed the regional power-sharing administration in Belfast and left the region without a functioning government since early 2022.

Northern Ireland's political parties are united, however, in opposing the law. Emma Little-Pengelly, legacy spokeswoman for the pro-British Democratic Unionist Party, said when the bill passed the House of Commons last week, "the government's decision to railroad through these proposals in the face of unanimous opposition in Northern Ireland was abhorrent." Pat Finucane of Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein accused the British government of being "cynical and cruel."

U.K. veterans' groups are among the few organizations to have welcomed the legislation, which lifts the threat of prosecution from troops who served in Northern Ireland. □

China upgrades relationship with Venezuela to 'all weather' partnership

BEIJING (AP) — China announced Wednesday it was upgrading its diplomatic ties with Venezuela to an "all weather" partnership, a label reserved for a select few of its diplomatic partners.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is on a state visit to Beijing, his fifth as president, according to state broadcaster CCTV. He met with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The two signed a series of bilateral documents for Belt and Road projects and cooperation in the areas of the economy, trade, and

education, according to CCTV. China is willing to increase imports of Venezuelan products, Xi said, according to the CCTV readout.

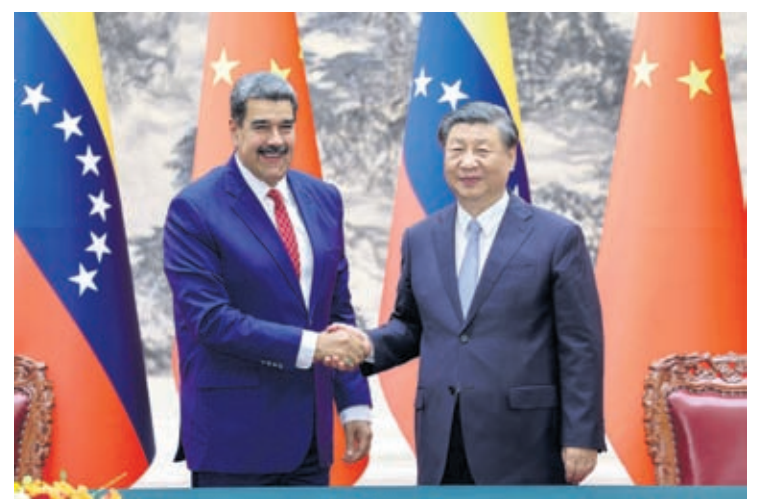
The broadcaster did not give other details on the nature of the cooperation. Venezuela is also the first Latin American country to join in China's International Lunar Research station, a long-term project that will study the moon.

One of the best known of China's select all-weather strategic partnerships is with Pakistan, where it has invested \$25.4 billion over

the past decade.

About 7 million people have left Venezuela during a complex political and humanitarian crisis that has been ongoing for the past decade. The country is reliant on oil as its main export but has faced U.S. sanctions. Last year, the Biden administration eased part of its sanctions on the country.

Maduro has cultivated China throughout his years in power. His country has received support from China in loans, cash and investment worth tens of billions of dollars. □



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, visiting Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro, left, shakes hands with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping during a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023.

Associated Press

Baltic states ban vehicles with Russian license plates in line with EU sanctions interpretation

By JARI TANNER
Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have banned vehicles with Russian license plates from entering their territory, a joint move in line with a recent interpretation of the European Union's sanctions against Moscow over its war on Ukraine.

Estonia imposed the measure on Wednesday morning, matching similar actions by southern neighbors Latvia and Lithuania earlier in the week. Estonia's interior ministry said the decision by the Baltic nations which are all NATO members that border Russia followed "the additional interpretation of the sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation published by the European Commission" on Sept. 8.

Under the EU's decision, motor vehicles registered in the Russian Federation are no longer allowed to enter the territory of the 27-member bloc, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The



Trucks stands at the post-customs international checkpoint Chernyshevskoye at the Russian-Lithuanian border in Kaliningrad region, Russia, Wednesday, June 22, 2022.

Associated Press

Baltic states are among the most vocal European critics of Russia and President Vladimir Putin.

"The goal of the sanctions against Russia is to force the aggressor country to retreat to its borders," Es-

tonian Interior Minister Lauri Läänemets said in a statement. "We found in consultation with the Latvian and Lithuanian authorities that the restrictions are most effective when sanctions are imposed jointly," Lään-

emets said.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, on Tuesday denounced the European Commission's move as "racist." He sug-

gested that Moscow could retaliate by suspending diplomatic ties with the EU and recalling its diplomats from Brussels.

"Only retaliatory restrictions mirroring that (ban) could lead to the lifting of such EU 'rules,'" he said.

Russia's Federal Customs Service reported Wednesday that the first vehicle attempting to enter Estonia with Russian license plates was turned away at a crossing point in the eastern Estonian city of Narva on the border with Russia. The service's online statement didn't specify whether it was a truck or a passenger car.

The ban on entering with a motor vehicle applies regardless of the reason for its owner's or user's stay in Estonia or the EU. The ban doesn't apply to vehicles intended for the use of diplomatic and consular missions of the EU and its member states, including delegations, embassies and missions. □

EU chief announces major review saying the bloc should grow to over 30 members

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union's chief executive said Wednesday that her services will launch a major series of policy reviews to ensure that the 27-nation bloc can still function properly as it invites in new members in coming years.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that the EU must prepare to grow to more than 30 members. Ukraine, Moldova and countries in the Western Balkans are among those in line.

Even at 27 strong, the world's biggest trading bloc finds it difficult to make some decisions, particularly those requiring unanimous agreement. Hungary and Poland, notably, have come under fire from Brussels for democratic backsliding and they've routinely voted against foreign

policy and migration decisions.

Still, pressure is mounting for Europe to open its doors. Concerns have been raised about Russia's influence in the Western Bal-

kans, particularly in Serbia and Bosnia. Some countries in the region have waited for years to join and have sometimes seen progress in their membership quest stymied.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen delivers her annual speech on the state of the European Union and its plans and strategies looking ahead, at the European Parliament, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023 in Strasbourg, eastern France.

Associated Press

"History is now calling us to work on completing our union," von der Leyen told EU lawmakers in Strasbourg, France.

"In a world where size and weight matters, it is clearly in Europe's strategic interest."

At the same time, she said, "we need to look closer at each policy and see how they would be affected." Von der Leyen said the commission's reviews will examine how each policy sector in areas like the economy, energy, agriculture or migration would need to be adapted in the event of expansion.

"We will need to think about how our institutions would work how the (EU) parliament and the commission would look. We need to discuss the future of our budget in terms of what it finances, how it fi-

nances it, and how it is financed," she said.

European Council President Charles Michel, who chairs summits of EU leaders, believes that new countries should be welcomed in by 2030. On Monday, the presidents of Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Albania also said that enlargement should happen "not later than 2030."

Membership was vital "in view of the continued Russian aggression against Ukraine and its spillover effect" in the region, they said.

But von der Leyen insisted that "accession is merit-based," and that the progress these countries make in aligning their laws with EU rules and standards should dictate the pace of membership, rather than some arbitrary deadline. □



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Blackstone Beach



(Oranjestad)—Named after its most recognizable feature, the Blackstone Beach almost represents the opposite of the typical Aruban beaches. For one, it has black sand and is covered in black smooth

stones. Secondly, it lies on the northern side of the island, away from the white sandy beaches of in the southern region. So, if you feel up for something different—or if it's opposite day, visit the Blackstone Beach.

Blackstone Beach shows the more natural side of Aruba: the stones that cover the beaches and the shape of it has been crafted for thousand years via volcanic eruptions, coral reef movements and wave activity of the rural northern part of the island.

Located further east to the Natural Bridge and Andicuri Beach, the Blackstone Beach is relatively easy to access. Once you get passed the Ayo Rock Formation, take the Andicuri road leading up to Andicuri Beach. There, you can park your car and take a 1km hike towards Blackstone Beach.



This beach forms part of the Arikok National Park and is therefore a site that is preserved. This is why it is also relatively untouched by commercial influences. Despite being called a beach, do note that it is not advised to swim in the water, as the current is

very strong and can easily stray you further in the wild ocean. However, you can still enjoy a spectacular view of the stones and the northern ocean that stretches out in front of the beach and take a picture with your friends or family!☐

The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and its history

(Oranjestad)—The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins is one of the most visited places by tourists on the island, as it lies along the northern coast line near the mini pool and on the way to the Natural Bridge. Despite its seemingly plain appearance, this ruin represents one of the most important histories of the island: The Aruban Gold Rush.

Built in 1872 by English company Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd, the gold mill at Bushiribana was constructed in the area where most gold was found by locals. The story of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when a first exploration for gold on the island was commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some gold, it was enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young boy found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold. About 25 pounds worth was found.

At the same time, the Aruban government took immediate actions, and informed Curacao that gold was found. At first, everyone could look for gold, as long as they sold it to the government. However, after some time, the government decided to implement stricter rules and banned local search parties.

Over the years, concession-holding had seen different companies from around the world, all of which used primitive methods to dig and carve



out gold from the rocks. Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was no different, but used a unique method that involved grinding the rocks and letting the dust be blown away by the strong northeast wind, leaving clumps of gold behind. The next step was melting the gold and letting it attach to quicksilver in order to obtain pure gold. All these processes were done at the Bushiri-

bana Gold Mill.

The gold mill itself had a short lifespan: only 10 years in service, but its structure remained relatively solid till this day, and is now a historical remnant.

Sources: Etnia Nativa & goldminer-anch.com.



Rhythms Circus Company Aruba: putting Aruba's name on the world stage



Rhythms Circus Company Aruba is a talented group of young people working daily to present their art in the form of acrobatics, dancing, acting and singing. After an impactful participation in one of America's biggest talent shows, they are now bringing their amazing talent to Aruba!

In a show full of light, music, and with performances to famous musical figures like Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson and Tina Turner, the group consisting of 15 people from various countries delights the audience with their artistic prowess at the Paseo Herencia Mall, every Wednesday and Friday starting at 7pm. Each day has a different show, so you can attend both nights for the complete experience!

The group, under the leadership of directors and creators Diego Jaramillo and Yamila Hernandez are opening the doors to the ballroom to our local audience as well as our visi-

tors so that everyone can have the privilege of experiencing this wonderful show.

Hernandez explained that the idea for this project started in 2010 when she came to work in Aruba. After being on the island for a while she decided to stay and live here, and she met Diego Jaramillo, who is currently her partner. Together they came with the idea to establish a company together with other professional artists, with the goal of living from their art.

Hernandez says that the work is hard – all of the performers are professional artists, and while the production of the show is not a challenge for them, selling the idea proved difficult since at the time, there weren't any shows of its kind on the island.

America's Got Talent

Currently they are offering a show with music, choreography and at the end, they have a shocking acrobatics ending, one that was seen by thousands of people around the world when the group travelled to Los Angeles in the United States to represent Aruba in America's Got Talent. Hernandez said that the show was very important for them to meet the public present because people could experience this performance live and right before their eyes.

Their presentation in America's Got Talent "was incredible" and they were able to meet the jury and many other artists staying there for three months. But the exhaustion and physical toll was so great that Diego suffered an accident, and because of this, they had to cancel all future commitments.



Reservations and tickets

To make a reservation to see this incredible display of creativity and acrobatics, scan the QR code which will take you directly to their website for a booking. To find more information about RCCA, please visit their Instagram page @rccaruba. ☐



Aruba to me

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Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations



(Oranjestad)—The Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations are known locally as one of the crucial sites to have in your “off-road” trip itinerary. These naturally formed rock formations as just one of the few places on the island that hold a rich history of our culture and of our ancestors.

Ayo

The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to

the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced terrain that consists of several giant boulders, resting neatly on top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding “mondi”*. This is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock formation contains stairs that lead you to the top of the highest boulder, offering a breath-taking view of the



The Casibari Rock Formation

comfort and peace.

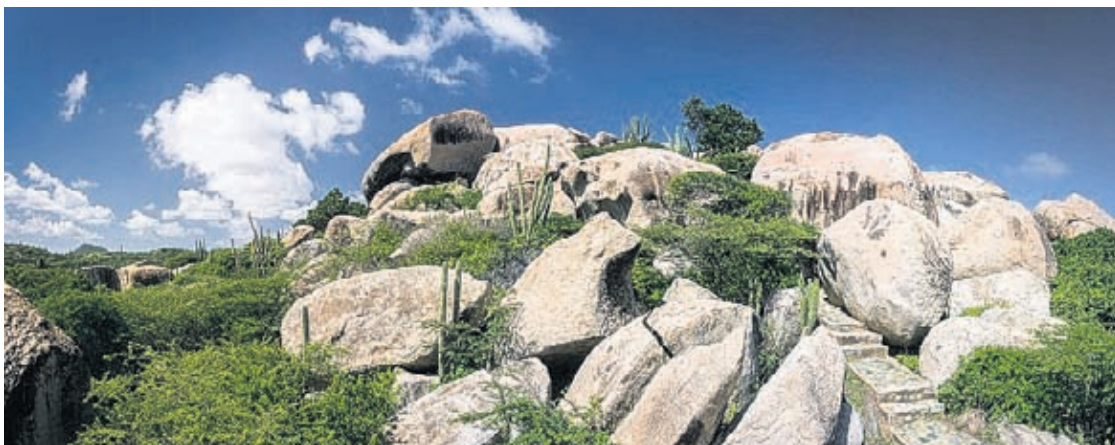
Casibari

Probably the busier rock formation site, the Casibari is situated more in the center of the island, much closer—and more accessible—to the general public. Just like Ayo, Casibari is a fenced area containing several boulders that lay on top or lean on each other. The best aspect of the Casibari Rock Formation is the accompanying view when you climb up the top of the round, flat bolder. For this position, you can see the majority of the island and the ocean in the south. Right in front of the entrance, there is the Casi-

bari Café and Grill, a great place to get refreshments and snack before continuing your off-road adventure!

Both sites are open free to the public, 24 hours a day. However, unless you are taking a trip with a professional tour guide, there are no guides at the sites to help you climb the rock. So, do be careful when trudging on the boulders, and make sure to befriend any roaming goats you see along the way! □

**Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi!*



The Ayo Rock Formation

Episode 51: Caribbean Indigenous Art Caquetian Designs

The anthropology of art studies art in relation to the cultural context in which Aruban's claim to inherit is inspired in these art works. This offers a vision of the ideas that guard and mobilize the aesthetic creation, and analyzes the multiple universes where it is expressed and works.

The encounter of indigenous societies with the conquerors amazed by the reality of a New World, had a convergence in a cultural confrontation where aesthetic and symbolic factors were part of it, flowing to our time through history and archeology, to recover objects of knowledge and as components of new processes of artistic creation and a sense of belonging to an unique and separate group of people that has survived ages of suppression while using this same principals to claim and obtain a special status whit in the Dutch kingdom

Aruba conserves an indigenous patrimonial legacy with strong aesthetic values.

Etnia Nativa rediscovers studies and admires the expressive power of this legacy, incorporating artistic archaeological objects of our cultural heritage.

Patrish: representing the crested bobwhite who's song remind us to the song for the dead. Fertility Deity 'Warawashi que'. 'Warawashi que' was the name to which the women of the Aruban's fishermen were known. This was a Deity of Fertility for our Caquetio natives which its original is displayed in the AMA Archaeological Museum Aruba.

In this abstract figure: if we notice you can observe the figure of a fish in vertical position and the vagina of the woman represented the mouth of a fish made out of clay. The pregnant woman figure represents what fertility will bring, life and renewal.

The same happens with the

bat. Figures that represents totems. Enigmatic animals, who symbolizes happiness and wisdom received from spirits of the underworld, Cave dwellers whit the ability to pass through special portals in order to bring back spiritual massages for the shamans of what to expect.

Frog fertility totem: The frog as spirit animal or totem reminds us of the transient nature of our lives. As symbol of transition and transformation, this spirit animal supports us in times of change. Strongly associated with the water element, it connects us with the world of emotions and feminine energies.

The Dori is Aruba's only frog species and an ancestral fertility totem. The association with the rainy season explains it all. Happy Dori's sing all night in celebration of the coming harvest and abundance.

The rattlesnake; care taker of the Cunuco or plantation, that travel after sun-

down and picks on rodents which can damage to harvest. Nowadays we can hardly find this endangered animal since urbanization has taken over the cunuco's and their habitat. Aruba's rattles snakes are a separate and unique to our island a specie that really deserves our protection.

Etnia Nativa presents an anthropological approach to what we can call ancient Aruban natural relations using art in order to understand the indigenous aesthetic creation of island native expressions. It values the way in which the indigenous universe and its aesthetic production have been recorded throughout history, generating new artistic products. It discusses indigenous aesthetic conceptions, their connection to the natural environment, and how they influenced the processes of cultural interaction with Europeans. Finally, it focuses on ceramics as a key resource for the indigenous aesthetic expression, as a way of anthropological recovery of



the precolonial creative production in connection with contemporary art inspired on native Aruban motives.

Native Americans of Aruba, from Caquetian original stock where the local potters well in to the era of Dutch colonial occupation.

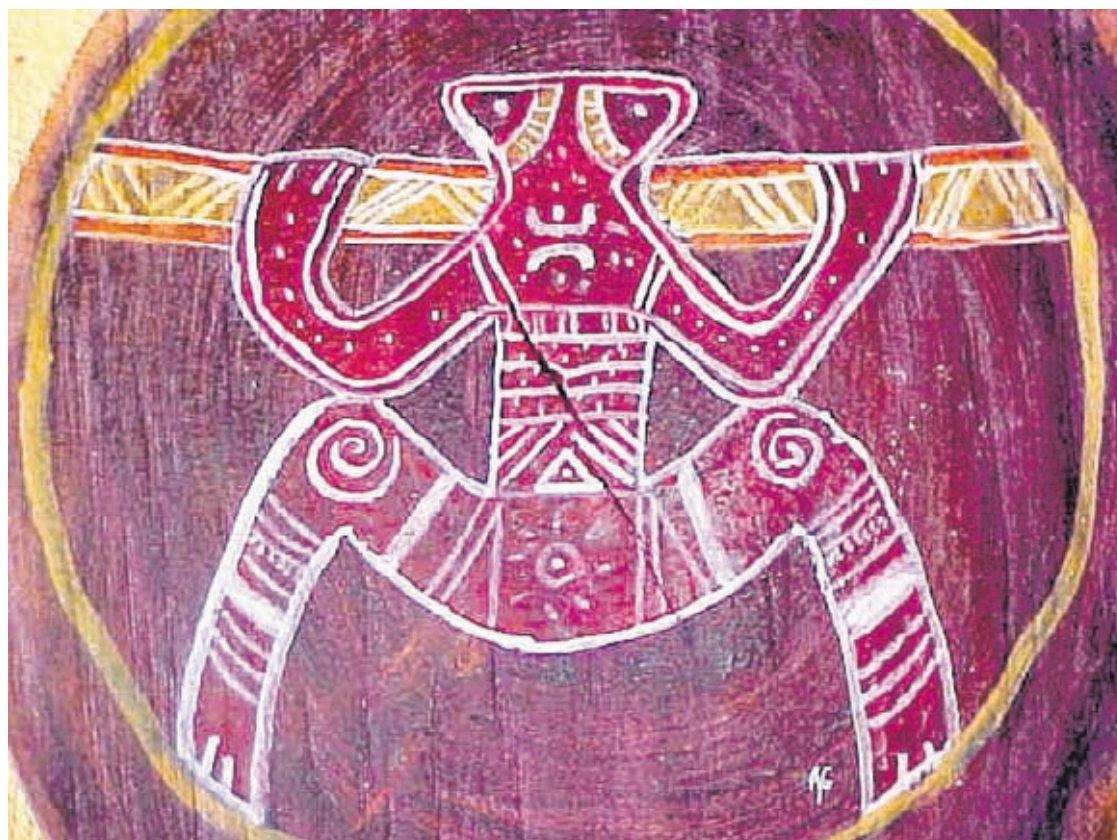
They were the expert Ceramists and Potters. Their mas-

tering of this art as a cult was cosmological inspired, expressed throughout their techniques. This heritage was transmitted from generation to generation till the beginning of the 20th century.

Those who participate in our cultural and interactive tour learn the management of anthropological, historical and aesthetic categories, obtain knowledge of anthropology, art history and archeology of both Aruba and the Caribbean and of America as a whole, obtain information concerning resent research of the region, and a generalize comparative vision of indigenous cultures, iconography and aesthetic elements of island societies.

Critical evaluation of cultural heritage management, cultural heritage and the information associated with art and cultural concepts based on artistic creation around the theme.

To get to know more about Aruba and its origins, its animals and culture, we highly recommend you to book your visit to our renowned cultural center, where encounter sessions have been entertaining curious participants for decades. Mail us at etnianativa03@gmail.com to confirm your participation. Our facilities and activities take place close to high rise hotels. □



Did you know about... Basic driving rules on Aruba (part 1)

(Oranjestad)—Have you ever felt confused when you're driving on the highways or backstreets of Aruba? Then we present a simple guide to some of the basic rules of Aruban traffic, along with some tips for things to look out for.

Speed limit

Legally, the speed limit on the four-lane highways is 80 km/h. This speed limit also counts for the main roads that are connected to the highways. The minimum speed is 50 km/h. Most people drive around 60 km/h on the main roads and about 70 km/h on the highways. There are also areas that indicate a speed limit on a sign; these are usually around populated and school areas.

The four-lane highways contain the left-lane, also known as the "fast" lane for each direction. Here is where vehicles can drive up to the maximum speed. However, legally it is not permitted to drive for long periods of time on the left lane. This lane is primarily designed for drivers to switch lanes before a roundabout, for example, if your exit on the roundabout is on your far left. The general lane to drive in—both at maximum and minimum speed—is on the right lane.



Roundabouts

Speaking of roundabouts, it is important to know where you have to enter and drive on the roundabout to make your exit. A good rule of thumb is to count the exits starting from your right side. So, exit 1 would be on your right; exit 2 would be straight ahead; exit 3 would be on your far left and exit 4 would lead to the road paralleled to the one you're on, heading in the other direction.

Most roundabouts have these 4 exits, so they are relatively simple. When you're driving on the four-lane highway, it is important to know when to switch to the left lane to make your

exit: if your exit is on your far left (exit 3), then you need to switch to the left lane on the high way before nearing the roundabout so you can take the path that leads you directly to your exit. If your exit is on your right or if you're going straight ahead, you can keep driving in the right lane of the highway.

It's also important to know that vehicles about to enter the roundabout must yield to those already on it. A good rule of thumb is to look out if someone is coming from your left side.

However, other roundabouts can be quite tricky to navigate...

Watty Vos Boulevard (the "paperclip" roundabout)

Probably the biggest roundabout on the island, the "paperclip" roundabout on the Watty Vos Boulevard is one of the trickier roundabouts that could—and has—caused confused among both tourists and locals. However, once you take a good look at it, it's fairly simple. The basis is just the same as a regular roundabout (left exit? left lane! etc.), but instead of having four different exits like on a regular roundabout, now you have two extra; one on the right and the other on the left side of the roundabout. The rules don't change at all, you just have to keep an extra eye open.

Airport roundabout

Ah, yes. The infamous airport roundabout. The favorite roundabout amongst local, because of its easy (hard) lanes that never (always) cause confusion among drivers. Sarcasm aside, this roundabout can be tricky to enter, especially when you're driving from the direction of the airport heading. When you're driving away from the airport reaching the roundabout, you'll be faced with three lanes. The far right lane is to take the exit 1 out heading east (right lane of highway). The middle exit is

used for exit 1 (left lane of highway), 2 and 3. The far left exit is used to only exit on exit 3 (left lane of highway) and 4.

"Las Americas" roundabout

The Las Americas roundabout is located near the Talk of the Town hotel, west from the airport roundabout. This roundabout may look like a regular roundabout—and for the most part, it is. However, when you are driving from the east going in the direction of town, please take note that there are two exits on your right.

When you're driving towards this roundabout, you'll notice that the road becomes wider, splitting into two lanes. The right lane is used to take the first and second exit on the right. If you want to exit straight ahead, you must drive on the left lane!

It's always scary to drive in new places where the traffic may look and work differently, but once you get it right once, you'll get the hang of it in no time. Additionally, all roundabouts and roads on Aruba have signs and arrows painted on the road to help guide you. So take your time, keep your eyes open and don't forget to wear a seat belt! □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Plucked instrument
- 5 Words from JFK's inaugural address
- 11 Lotion additive
- 12 1965 TV western
- 13 Fly catchers
- 14 Small crown
- 15 Didn't panic
- 17 "Evil Woman" band
- 18 Thompson of "Creed"
- 22 Played a role
- 24 Spoken tests
- 25 "Cheers" setting
- 26 Atlas page
- 27 Spots for tots
- 30 Scout settlements
- 32 Get some shuteye
- 33 Thurman of film
- 34 Emmy-winning police drama
- 38 Infant outfit
- 41 "Damn Yankees" role
- 42 "Bye!"
- 43 Taverns
- 44 Play-ground fixtures
- 45 Tidy

DOWN

- 1 War backer
- 2 Out of the wind
- 3 Emmy-winning role for Dick Van Dyke
- 4 Mortar's mate
- 5 Alan with Emmys
- 6 Reach by boat
- 7 Emmy-winning role for Michael Richards
- 8 Homer's neighbor
- 9 Lyric poem
- 10 Selleck of "Blue Bloods"
- 16 Atlantic catch

R	O	B	S		R	A	M	P	U	P
I	D	E	A		A	R	O	U	S	E
S	O	A	P		B	E	R	G	E	N
E	R	A		W	I	N	E			
		R	H	O	D	A		H	B	O
B	A	T	O	N		S	M	E	A	R
A	C	H	E				E	L	L	A
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H	E	R		O	R	I	O	N		
		S	L	I	P		H	O	V	
H	E	A	T	O	N		D	U	N	E
O	R	G	A	N	S		A	N	T	E
G	E	O	R	G	E		S	T	O	P

Yesterday's answer

- 19 TV role for Ted Danson
- 20 Open-handed hit
- 21 Nile snakes
- 22 Basics
- 23 Lenny's pal on "The Simpsons"
- 28 Emmy-winning role for Robert Guillaume
- 29 Bond activity
- 30 Cow's chew
- 31 Spielberg's production company
- 35 Violin parts
- 36 Arm bone
- 37 Sunrise site
- 38 CIA forerunner
- 39 Right away
- 40 Yale student

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11				12					
13				14					
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		17			18		19	20	21
22	23				24				
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27			28	29	30	31			
32					33				
			34	35				36	37
38	39	40				41			
42						43			
44						45			

9-14

AXYDIBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

9-14

CRYPTOQUOTE

H M F K F W Z Y ' H W C W Y A Z I Z Y

O M J M W E Y ' H H W A N F G H J M Z E

G J S . — M W Y N O Z A A Z W C E E K .

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE HISTORY OF LIFE ON EARTH IS MOSTLY AN OCEAN HISTORY. ... THE OCEAN IS REALLY WHERE THE ACTION IS. SYLVIA EARLE

Income too high for Medicaid? 'Spend down' to qualify

By ALEX ROSENBERG
of NerdWallet

More than 1.4 million people have lost Medicaid coverage in 2023 because they no longer meet the eligibility requirements, according to August tracking data from KFF, a health policy nonprofit.

After a pause on disenrollments during the COVID-19 public health emergency, beneficiaries now must prove that they still meet the income limits for Medicaid. People whose income has gone up risk losing their coverage.

What some beneficiaries might not realize is that even if their income seems too high for Medicaid, they might be able to spend down some income to qualify. For certain beneficiaries, spending on medical bills, including Medicare premiums, can be subtracted from their income when applying for Medicaid.

WHAT IS A MEDICAID SPEND-DOWN?

A spend-down is like a health insurance deductible, according to Catrice Simpson, a supervisory social service representative for the Washington, D.C., Department of Health Care Finance. "It is the amount you must show proof of meeting or exceeding before the insurance plan starts to pay, in this case it's before Medicaid starts to pay," Simpson wrote in an email.

For example, someone with income \$200 above their state's limit for Medicaid might become eligible if they have at least \$200 in qualifying medical bills. People who qualify as "medically needy," such



In this Nov. 8, 2018 file photo, the U.S. Medicare Handbook is photographed in Washington.

Associated Press

as those with certain disabilities, children or people age 65 and older, are eligible to spend down income to qualify for Medicaid.

Rules for who counts as medically needy vary by state. For example, in Washington, D.C., parents or caretakers of children under 21 years old, pregnant people and people living in nursing homes can also spend down to become eligible for Medicaid.

HOW DOES SPENDING DOWN AFFECT MEDICAL BILLS?

Spending down to meet the income requirements for Medicaid means that Medicaid can cover some of your medical bills. But it won't cover the bills you used to qualify.

For example, if you pay \$300 out of pocket for a doctor's visit and subtract that amount from your income, Medicaid won't reimburse you for it later. But additional bills you didn't use for the spend-down could be covered by Medicaid.

If you have both Medic-

aid and another kind of coverage, they can work together to pay for your care. For example, if you have both Medicare and Medicaid, Medicare pays for services first, and then Medicaid pays for additional costs that Medicare didn't cover, such as certain copays, coinsurance and deductibles.

BENEFITS FOR MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES

For people age 65 and older and those with certain disabilities, Medicare covers most health care, but not everything.

"There's often the misconception that Medicare will pay for long-term care, and it will not," says Connecticut elder law attorney Daniel Tully.

Medicaid does cover long-term care, Tully says, and could be an option for those facing high costs Medicare won't cover. Those beneficiaries might be able to qualify by spending down or taking other estate planning actions such as establishing a Medicaid-compliant trust, Tully says.

Medicare beneficiaries who spend down to qualify for Medicaid get an additional benefit: the "Extra Help" subsidy. Extra Help pays for the premiums, deductible and most of the out-of-pocket costs for Medicare Part D, which covers prescription drugs. The government estimates that it's worth about \$5,300 per year. □

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24/7

4-H teams with Netflix's 'Spy Kids: Armageddon' to launch new learning platform Clover

By **GLENN GAMBOA**

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The National 4-H Council is growing in a new direction online by launching its e-learning platform Clover with a collaboration with Netflix and its new movie "Spy Kids: Armageddon," the organization announced Wednesday.

Jill Bramble, who took over as president and CEO of the National 4-H Council in August, said she wants the new platform to be the digital equivalent of the in-person experience that 4-H has provided to young people for more than 120 years.

"It allows us to keep kids where they are whether they are in Manhattan, New York or Manhattan, Kansas and still offer highly relevant and engaging content for young people to prepare for careers of the future," Bramble told The Associated Press in an interview. "The skills that they will need to be successful look very different than they were for us."

Clover features more than 220 online educational activities for students, ages 5 to 18, developed by 4-H's partners in the Cooperative Extension System and its network of land grant universities. The topics covered range from farming



In this undated 2023 photo, National 4-H Council CEO Jill Bramble, right, talks with a 4-H member at the Dorothy P. Flint 4-H Camp in Riverhead, N.Y., in 2023.

Associated Press

to space exploration, from financial literacy to stress management all designed to inform and empower young people.

The innovation, Bramble says, comes in the way the Clover platform engages with the students by using gamification and entertainment, which led to the collaboration with Netflix.

"It was a natural alignment," she said. "When you think of the intent behind 'Spy Kids,' those kids are tackling some of the world's most pressing issues and they're doing this through coding and gamification. We wanted to align that with what we see is possible through Clover." Encouraging interest in coding and other STEM (science, technology, en-

gineering and math) disciplines has become increasingly important throughout education, especially after students' science and math test scores declined during the pandemic.

Bob Hughes, director of K-12 Education for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's United States Pro-

gram, recently told The Associated Press that improving STEM education is a high priority for the non-profit, which is not connected to Clover, but last year donated \$1 billion to improve math education in the next four years.

"Math is a such a gatekeeper for future success and not just success for becoming a physicist, but for your day to day life," Hughes said. "It's a very tough subject for many kids. It's emotional for many kids. And if they don't succeed in mathematics, they can start to develop a mindset and an identity that suggests that not only are they not good at math, but at other academics as well. □

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'Invisible Beauty' offers a unique take on fashion through eyes of trailblazer Bethann Hardison

By **LEANNE ITALIE**

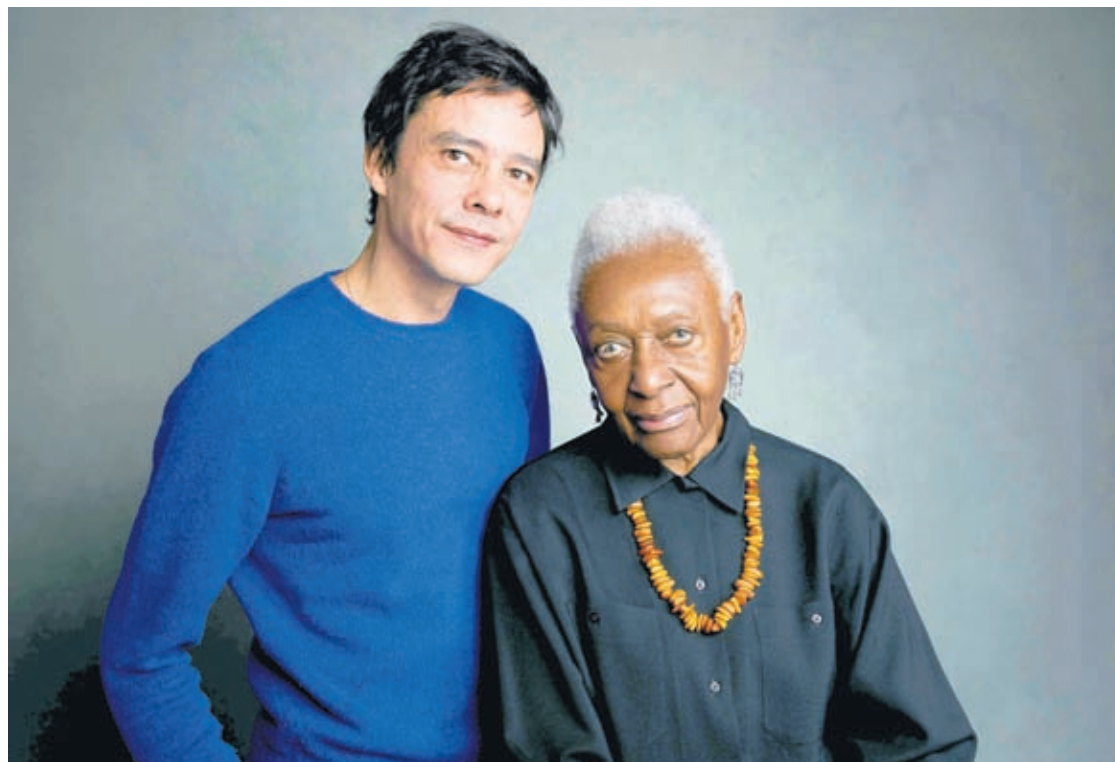
AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "I always know, because I've lived life long enough, you can change things," Bethann Hardison said at the start of "Invisible Beauty," a new documentary focused on her more than five decades in fashion.

"You might need to be your foot against the pedal, but you can change things."

That's exactly what the trailblazer has done in the fight for diversity, equity and inclusion in the fashion industry, first as a Garment District salesperson, then model, model agency owner and activist at large. She broke new ground as one of 10 Black models who participated in the "Battle of Versailles," in 1973, that pitted five French designers and five American designers against each other at the French landmark. The historic fashion show marked its 50th anniversary this year.

Later, Hardison founded the Black Girls' Coalition that lent voice to working models of color, and she kept the heat on in the 1990s when the industry began backsliding on diver-



Directors Frederic Tcheng, left, and Bethann Hardison pose for a portrait to promote the film "Invisible Beauty" at the Latinx House during the Sundance Film Festival on Sunday, Jan. 22, 2023, in Park City, Utah.

sity. Hardison put her foot to the pedal once again in 2013 when she created the Diversity Coalition, which called out designers using no or one Black model in their shows in New York, London, Paris and Milan.

Hardison, at 80, has earned the status of the "godmother of fashion," Tracee Ellis Ross said in the film out Friday. "She has changed the

way beauty is defined."

Hardison co-wrote and co-directed the film with Frédéric Tcheng ("Halston," "Dior and I").

Through archival footage and intimate interviews going back to her Brooklyn roots, the two offer an up-close look at her personal struggles and her place in fashion as she worked and continues to work to

broaden and preserve the rights of Black people, both on runways and behind the scenes.

Hardison and Tcheng talked to the AP about making the documentary and Hardison's legacy. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

AP: Why was this a good time to make the film?

HARDISON: I had no choice

because I had grant money, and you can sit on grant money for so long and not use it. I reached out to Frédéric, who I had gotten to know, and I told him that I needed to make this film now. At one point he just said, OK, but the only way I would do it is if you agree to be the co-director. I was just a little afraid that I couldn't do it.

I didn't know how to do it. I hadn't had the experience, so to have someone you can ride shotgun with was great.

TCHENG: I didn't know who Bethann was when I was asked to do a short film when she received the Council of Fashion Designers of America's Founder's Award (2014). I got a crash course on who Bethann is and I was stunned. The reason I asked her to co-direct was to go a little deeper. I was looking for a deeper connection and kind of a human adventure. And I knew that with someone like Bethann that I could trust and that I admired, that had done so much for mentoring people and creating community, she was going to step up and bring me up with her." □

Associated Press

Norwegian princess to marry American self-professed shaman

By **MARK LEWIS**

Associated Press

STAVANGER, Norway (AP)

— The Norwegian king's eldest child, Princess Märtha Louise, will marry her Hol-

lywood partner, the self-professed shaman Durek Verrett, next summer, the couple announced Wednesday.

King Harald V said in a statement that his family was "delighted to welcome" Verrett, who is from California and claims to be a sixth-generation shaman. The Norwegian princess can trace her ancestry back to Britain's Queen Victoria.

The couple, who toured the country in 2019 as "The Princess and The Shaman," have created waves in Norway with their alternative beliefs.

For the past several years, Märtha Louise, 51, has said she can talk with angels,

while Verrett, 48, claims that he communicates with a broad range of spirits, wields ancient medicine and has a medallion which helps ward off heavy energies, spells and darkness. The wedding will take place on Aug. 24 in Geiranger, prized for its typical Norwegian scenery among mountains and fjords. Geiranger is 265 kilometers (165 miles) north of Bergen, Norway's second-largest city. The VG newspaper, one of Norway's biggest, said that the wedding would be privately paid for.

"We are incredibly happy to be able to celebrate our love in Geiranger's beautiful surroundings. It means a lot to us to gather our loved

ones in a place that is so rich in history and spectacular nature. Geiranger is the perfect place to embrace our love," the couple said in a statement.

The state broadcaster NRK said that Verrett will move to Norway. And while he will join the royal family, he won't have a title.

Although Princess Märtha Louise is the first child of King Harald V, her brother, Crown Prince Haakon, who is two years younger than her, will succeed his father as king.

The Norwegian Constitution was altered in 1990 to allow the first born, regardless of gender, to take precedence in the line of succession. □



Norway's Princess Martha Louise and her fiancé Durek Verrett arrive at the government's party event in connection with Princess Ingrid Alexandra's 18th birthday, which is held at Deichman Bjoervika, Oslo's main library, Thursday June 16, 2022.

Associated Press

NFLPA renews call for natural grass to help prevent injuries after Rodgers gets hurt

By TERESA M. WALKER AP
Pro Football Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) —

The NFL Players Association wants the league to switch all its fields to natural grass, calling it “the easiest decision the NFL can make.”

Executive director Lloyd Howell issued a statement Wednesday morning saying NFL players “overwhelmingly prefer it and the data is clear that grass is simply safer than artificial turf.”

Howell said the issue “has been near the top of the players’ list during my team visits and one I have raised with the NFL.”

The players’ union called for the change less than 48 hours after a season-ending injury to four-time NFL MVP quarterback Aaron Rodgers. Rodgers tore his left Achilles tendon in his debut with the New York Jets on Monday night.

Howell said in his statement they know there is an investment to making such a change. But he said there’s a bigger cost to the NFL if the league keeps losing its best players to “unnecessary injuries.” He noted the NFL flips surfaces to grass for World Cup or soccer exhibitions.

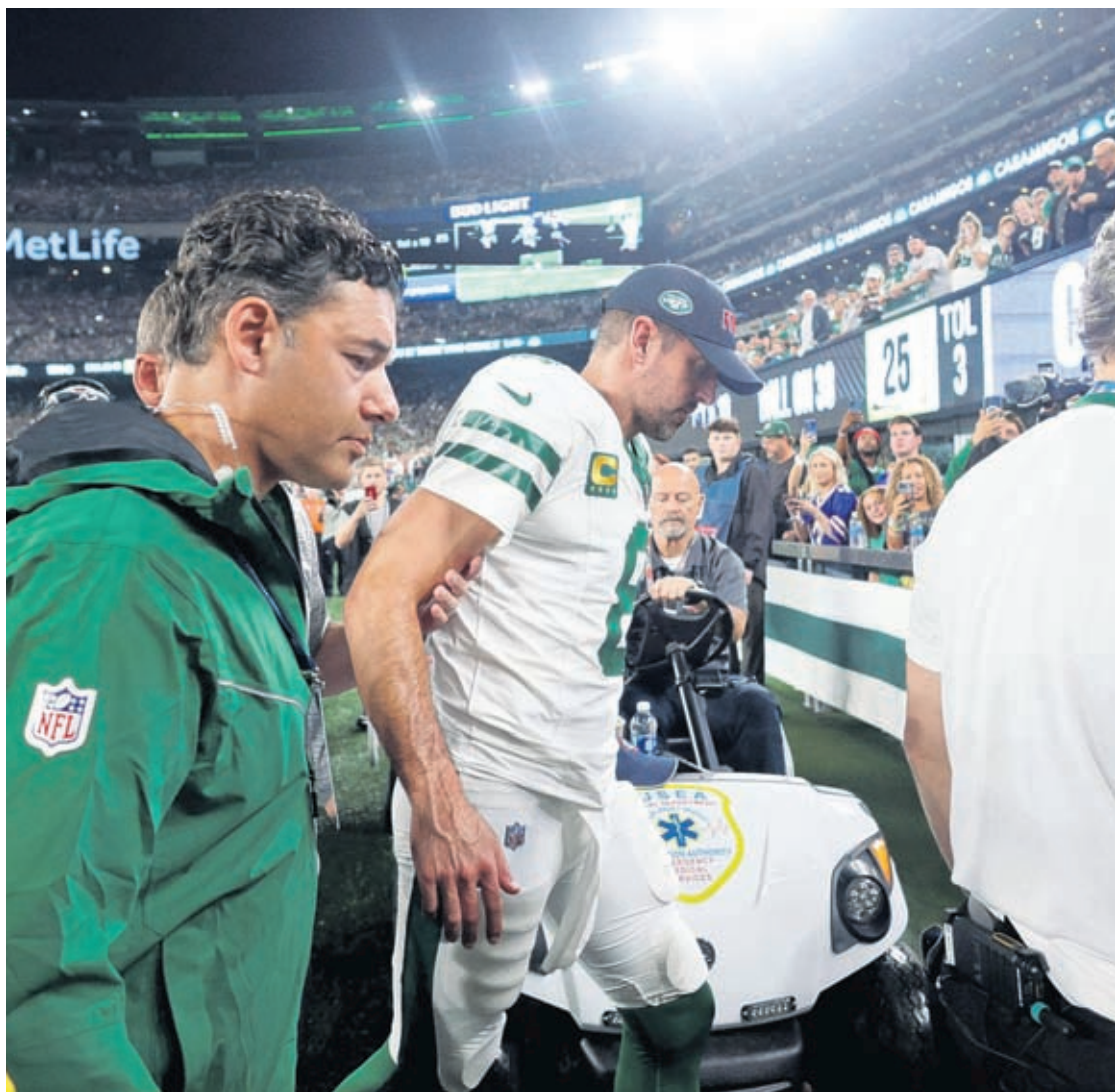
“But artificial surfaces are acceptable for our own players,” Howell said. “This is worth the investment and it simply needs to change now.”

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said Wednesday on ESPN’s “First Take” that the playing surface is a “complex issue,” and part of the collective bargaining agreement covered the use of science to measure injuries. The league and the union use the same data to gauge injuries.

Goodell noted Rodgers had one of two Achilles tendon injuries in the NFL’s first week, with the other on grass.

“That is where we make decisions, on the basis of science, not because I see an injury that I don’t like,” Goodell said.

“Ultimately, I want our experts to come back and



New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers (8) is helped off the field after getting injured during the first quarter of an NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills, Monday, Sept. 11, 2023, in East Rutherford, N.J.

give it to us and that is why we have engaged with this process and actually accelerated the process with the NFLPA to be able to get that kind of data so we can make those kinds of decisions.”

The union has asked for all grass fields for years.

The NFLPA in April pointed to studies from 2012-22 that it says show a significant increase in non-contact injuries on artificial surfaces vs. grass fields. The NFL has defended the use of artificial turf, pointing to 2021 when the numbers for injuries on both surfaces were close.

Rodgers argued for grass all over the league last November while with the Green Bay Packers. He said some artificial surfaces are softer, creating more wobble when the foot hits the ground.

“It’s that wobble that can cause some of these non-contact knee injuries that we’ve seen,” Rodgers said at the time. “I’m not sure if

that’s the standard that’s set for that type of surface or it’s the installation of that surface, but a lot of that could be just done away with if we had grass in every stadium.”

Agent Drew Rosenhaus echoed the NFLPA’s demand on social media Wednesday, sharing the union’s post.

“It’s a no brainer,” Rosenhaus wrote. “If the Owners care about their players & want to win, then they will make the switch! I encourage the leaders at the NFL to push for this change. It’s for the good of the players & the game itself.”

A new artificial surface was installed this year at MetLife Stadium. Jets coach Robert Saleh said Tuesday that he didn’t see the surface as being an issue in Rodgers’ injury.

The 39-year-old quarterback got hurt when he was taken down by Bills defender Leonard Floyd.

“If it was a non-contact in-

jury, then I think that would be something to discuss, obviously,” Saleh said. “But that was kind of forceable, I think that was trauma induced. I do know the players prefer grass and there is a lot invested in those young men.” Bills pass rusher Von Miller blames turf for the ACL injury that has him on the physically unable to perform list to start this season. He joined a campaign to get grass in all NFL stadiums.

Two-time NFL MVP Patrick Mahomes plays on grass in Kansas City and said it’s pretty simple.

“The numbers say that grass is healthier for the players, and I want to play on the surface that keeps me healthy,” Mahomes said.

The Tennessee Titans will debut the NFL’s newest artificial surface Sunday in their home opener against the Los Angeles Chargers after trying, and struggling, to grow grass in Nashville for 24 seasons. The Titans

regularly replaced sod in the middle of the field, especially late in seasons.

Their fake turf features coconut husks and cork instead of rubber pellets. The Titans cited NFL data that put Nissan Stadium among the league leaders for games with players having lower-body injuries.

Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill and two-time All-Pro safety Kevin Byard both made clear they prefer grass. The Titans played one preseason game on the new surface, and Tennessee beat Virginia on Sept. 2 playing on the new turf.

Mike Vrabel, the Titans’ coach who played 14 NFL seasons in stadiums that featured original artificial turf, said the new field was definitely different. He said Wednesday the technology has really improved and he likes what Tennessee is using.

“I understand that we need to do everything that we can to keep our players safe and understand that sometimes injuries are unavoidable based on, whatever you’re doing and playing professional sports,” Vrabel said.

In the college game at Nissan Stadium, Virginia nose tackle Oluwasegun Agunloye was carted off at the end of the first quarter after slipping as he celebrated on his way to the sideline. Volunteers wide receiver Bru McCoy said the surface at Nissan Stadium was bouncy and required some adjustment. But he said he felt fast.

“At times, it felt like it had give,” McCoy said. “At times, it felt like you could really put your foot in the ground. No issues with it.” □



Rays top Twins 5-4 on Arozarena's 9th-inning homer

By DAVE CAMPBELL

AP Sports Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) —

Randy Arozarena hit a tiebreaking home run for Tampa Bay with two outs in the ninth inning, helping the Rays beat the Minnesota Twins 5-4 on Wednesday heading into a weekend showdown with AL East leader Baltimore.

The Rays (90-57), who entered three games behind the Orioles in the division race, reached 90 wins for the ninth time in their last 15 full seasons. Tampa Bay starts a four-game series on Thursday at Baltimore, which played later at St. Louis.

Arozarena sent a 448-foot drive to the third deck above left field on a 3-2 sweep from Griffin Jax (6-



Tampa Bay Rays' Yandy Diaz hits a two-run double during the second inning of a baseball game against the Minnesota Twins, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023, in Minneapolis.

Associated Press

10), who leads the staff in losses. The AL Central-leading Twins (76-70) began the day with a 7½-game advantage on Cleveland, which played later at San Francisco.

Colin Poche walked pinch-hitter Jordan Luplow with one out in the ninth and pinch-runner Andrew Stevenson stole second base, but Robert Stephenson recorded his first save for the Rays by striking out pinch hitter Christian Vázquez to end the game.

Yandy Díaz, who was painfully forced out of Tuesday's game with a bruised testicle, hit a two-run double in the second inning that Curtis Mead started with a triple. Mead added an RBI double in the third for a 4-0 lead against Dallas Keuchel.

Rays starter Taj Bradley gave up consecutive home runs to Matt Wallner and Kyle Farmer in the bottom half. Then Max Kepler hit a two-run triple with two outs in the fifth to tie the game. Dylan Floro, Emily Pagán and Caleb Thielbar gave the Twins a combined four innings of sparkling relief. Jax was one strike from joining them on the scoreless list until Arozarena made him pay with his 21st homer this season. Jax became the first Twins reliever with double-digit defeats since Ron Davis went 7-11 with 14 blown saves in 1984. Only five relievers have done that in team history. Mike Marshall has the club relief record with 14 losses in 1979.

MAKING HIM WORK

Farmer followed his homer with a 16-pitch at-bat including 10 foul balls that ended with a strikeout when he chased a curveball that dived well below the zone to start the fifth. But his effort might well have precipitated the rally. Edouard Julien and Jorge Polanco followed with walks in a 33-pitch inning that Bradley didn't even finish. Bradley, who slapped his glove on his left thigh in frustration after losing Polanco to the walk, only needed 47 pitches for the first four frames. □



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